

5 Things I Learned Going To Military Prison

You don't want to get caught smuggling drugs by a mall cop, let alone the military. The military has its own special way of punishing lawbreakers, and while we don't know much about military justice, we assume it's not one hour to think in the time-out corner. We talked to Wayne Giles, who told us about how his army drug smuggling adventure went wrong.

The Army Can Be Mostly Boring, and That Means Drug Use

Wayne was sent to a sleepy outpost, where drugs were the best entertainment option available after he exhausted the special features on his unit's *Delta Farce* DVD. He's less Robert Duvall in *Apocalypse Now* and more Luke Wilson at the start of *Idiocracy*. Wayne was stationed in Vicenza, Italy, which is known for its gorgeous architecture and ... no, that's basically it. His job mostly involved sitting around and waiting for people to break military hardware. This led to a lot of downtime, and drugs quickly began to look like an alluring escape from the tedium of serving his country via tech support.

Wayne had previously done nothing but pot, but his colleagues introduced him to LSD and ecstasy. And so began a period of pretending he was stationed at Ibiza, "Partying with people who would take 10 to 12 hits of X along with 10 to 12 hits of acid and candy flip all night."

Drug use is of course as illegal in the army as it is mandatory at Cracked, but the random tests were infrequent and targeted only the most suspicious soldiers. (The ones who would answer "What's your status?" with "Beautiful and free, sir, like your hands.") Wayne was only tested twice. He was relieved to have passed, but also guilty.

"I was embarrassed and felt shameful," he says, "because not only are you concerned with the illegality, you're worried about things like getting called up for an emergency detail while you're jacked up."

Then Wayne ... got called for an emergency detail while jacked up. He was tripping on acid when he had to help respond to protesters outside the base. Thankfully the protest died down, because it's hard to drive away angry people when they look like dragons that breathe hugs.

Then he got annoyed about feeling guilty. "The same leadership that I looked up to were going out almost every night and getting drunk." So he continued his recreational drug use despite the risks, and soon realized he could turn his hobby into a job.

The Money Is Even Better Than You Think

That's right. There's money to be made from drugs. It's a Cracked exclusive report!

Wayne wasn't initially planning on becoming a free love Tony Montana. A friend back home mailed him some LSD, and he shared it with an army buddy (who, for convenience, we'll call Friend. Wait, no. We'll call him Buddy). Buddy asked Wayne to pick up a whole lot more the next time he was stateside, because sometimes supporting the troops means supporting them through a wall-melting acid trip.

Wayne agreed. He was technically breaking the laws of multiple counties, but it felt more like going on a beer run.

Then he saw the numbers. He could buy a sheet of LSD for \$250. The sheet could be cut up and sold as 100 tabs in Italy. Buddy wanted to sell them for \$30 each. That's three grand, of which Wayne would get two-thirds. *"I got a little excited -- 750 percent markup isn't anything to sneeze at."* Wayne wanted to stay away from the actual dealing, but he also decided to up the size of the sheet. Why? See "750 percent markup" above.

And he didn't have to stuff a condom up his ass, carve a hidden compartment into his wooden leg, or sneak past border guards. LSD comes in the form of colorless, odorless paper, so Wayne mailed himself a greeting card with the sheet inside. The card, no joke, read: *"On your birthday, free your mind."*

Wayne worried so little about getting caught that when he flew back to Italy, he completely forgot about the three hits of ecstasy he had on him. *"Most people implicitly trust soldiers,"* he says, *"so they don't ever think to search them. People look at a military ID as some kind of magical thing that means you're either above the law or somehow exempt from punishment."*

That's right: Security checked him about as carefully as they would a cancer-ridden child carrying a puppy, and he strolled through an international airport carrying illegal drugs with no issues. Everything's comin' up, Wayne! Nothing but good times forever!

The Good Times Don't Last Forever

When Wayne landed in Italy, he was driven to the military police station instead of the barracks. He was searched, and they found the ecstasy. *"That was the point,"* he says, *"that I realized I was completely screwed."*

Two military detectives spoke to him, and Wayne immediately recognized the good cop / bad cop routine. One threatened to send him to prison for a long time, while the other told him that everything would be fine if he cooperated. One also may have been a loose cannon with nothing left to lose, while the other only wanted his last two weeks before retirement to go smoothly. They then took him to an interrogation room:

"[It was] straight out of Law & Order. A single light over a plain table with two wooden chairs, concrete walls, one-way glass on one wall. I'd thought their method of interrogation would be a little different than what I saw on TV."

He actually laughed when he saw it, but he stopped laughing when a detective showed him photos of his greeting card and LSD sheet. Oh, and there was a signed statement from Buddy. While Wayne was in the US, Buddy had started pre-selling and approached an off-duty cop. They weren't the victims of an elaborate sting -- Buddy had just been dumb and unlucky, and then he showed zero hesitation in ratting out his business partner.

Wayne now really did abandon all hope at this point, because the parade of cliches stopped before he was assigned a down-on-her luck lawyer with something to prove. Instead, he was asked to waive his right to an attorney and sign a statement. He agreed. Legal Tip: Don't do that.

"That was the dumbest thing I could have ever done," he says. "I talked myself into my conviction. It's not that I wasn't guilty, but I could have been convicted of less, had I not opened my mouth."

We guess the lesson is that while drugs are important for a drug empire, what's even more important is trust.

Military Justice Is Both Incredibly Harsh And Fairly Lenient At The Same Time

"Whether I sell you a single joint or 100 kilos of cocaine," says Wayne, "I am sentenced under the same statute. Therefore, every charge has a high maximum sentence. A use charge carries a max of five years. Distribution has a max of 15. Exportation has a max of 15. Once you added up all the theoretical maximums of my crimes, the number got really high."

For mailing a greeting card with a nice surprise in it, Wayne officially faced 105 years in prison. For comparison, a Nebraska couple (domestically) mailed 50 LSD hits, pleaded away most of the charges, and wound up with probation, although Nebraska is infamous for its drug-fueled party lifestyle.

Now, the military was never going to lock away Wayne for over a century and make his skeleton finish his sentence. He ended up sentenced to four years, and was paroled after 27 months. But that emphasizes how ridiculous and arbitrary the theoretical penalty is, to the point where it confuses potential offenders instead of deterring them. One inmate Wayne met got six years for possessing weed. Another inmate who raped two children got 18 months. What do you get for selling nuclear secrets to North Korea? Six months coaching an inner-city basketball team?

Wayne was caught in June and convicted in December. He kept working during that six-month period, although he was moved to *"a lot of cleaning details, like raking leaves or cleaning offices."* He even went on a mission to Romania, where he ran phone and data lines, despite technically having his security clearance revoked.

Then he went to military prison -- which, despite what pop culture tells us, turned out to not be a supermax facility with turrets mounted on the walls and a minefield in the yard. It was more like Boot Camp 2: Booted Out. They'd wake up, do some work, do some cleaning, and enjoy some downtime. Even the guards were laidback; they were from Wayne's unit, they'd worked alongside him, and they liked him. The only oddity was that prisoners were banned from saluting, because then a guard would have to return the salute, and disgraced prisoners don't deserve that honor. (Why the guards couldn't ignore the salute is unclear; maybe it would just look stupid.)

Wayne saw two minor fights over basketball and a game of spades (presumably, the fight was about a partner bidding nil with an ace like some kinda *chump*). There were no gangs or racial tensions; it was just a bunch of soldiers trying to get through their latest posting together. Even the escape attempts were disappointingly lame. Wayne watched one inmate simply sneak out when a guard's back was

turned, but he was caught a mile down the road and had 18 months added to his 45-day sentence. Legal Tip: Wait the 45 days out. *It's 45 days!*

Jail's A Great Place To Learn More About Drugs

The most common offenses in Wayne's prison involved drugs, so the prison offered a rehab class on drug abuse. Hey, guess what happens when you get a bunch of people with a variety of drug knowledge together and tell them to "share"?

Wayne quotes Johnny Depp in *Blow*: "*I went in with a Bachelor's in marijuana, came out with a Doctorate in cocaine.*" He got an education on how to sell drugs more effectively, even though he didn't try for one -- people just liked sharing their knowledge, because it's the talkative drug dealers who tend to get caught. One guy even told him how to cook meth, and offered to write the recipe down. Wayne politely declined, because he enjoys having teeth and skin.

By the time Wayne was released, he had a whole new outlook on life. Or as he puts it: "*After making a mistake, even if you're trying to stop doing the thing that got you arrested, wouldn't you try to refine your methods a little bit to keep from getting caught again?*"